

Too Many Canadians?

Presentation to POGG
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Before he returned to his studies in Toronto after coming up to visit the old folks at Christmas, my son changed the display on my computer monitor to a map of the world at night. My husband said, “Are you trying to set Mom off?” Mom’s obsession with population growth is well-known by the family and a map of the world at night shows how much of the world at night is lit up by human activity.

It is striking however that a view of the world at night shows that most of Canada remains dark—because it is mostly uninhabited. Many people seem to think that needs to be fixed.

The mythology

Canada is a huge country. When our population is divided by the entire landmass of Canada, Canada has a very small number of inhabitants per square kilometre. This has led many people to think that Canada is underpopulated. Canada is also perceived to have abundant resources and a history of immigration. Combined with a global economic model that is predicated on growth, we have come to believe and are constantly being told by our leaders and the media that our economic well-being depends on growth. An implicit assumption is that growth can and should go on forever.

Conventional wisdom has it that economic growth is essential to our well-being and that a growing population keeps the economy growing. But Canadian women are falling down on the job and having only 1.6 children apiece, so we need immigrants to make Canada grow. In fact, we need them more than they need Canada. Furthermore, we need them because our population is aging and without immigrants there will be nobody to pay our pensions. We face a “looming labour shortage” and by 2011, all labour force growth in Canada will be due to immigration.

Has anyone looked at the data?

But has anyone ever looked at whether the population and the labour force really need to keep growing for our well-being? Has anyone ever suggested that most of Canada is uninhabited for much the same reason that Antarctica is uninhabited and if it were capable of supporting dense habitation, people would already be there? Has anyone looked at the environmental consequences of population growth in Canada?

Actually, yes. There are studies that have looked at all those questions over the past decades. And the obvious conclusions one would draw from them are almost totally at variance with the pro-growth messages that we are relentlessly bombarded with. How is it that we keep getting these messages in the face of so much evidence to the contrary? Inevitably we must ask, *cui bono*? Who benefits from our policy of seeking to increase Canada's population?

The politics

Does Canada even have a population policy? No it doesn't, but it does have an immigration policy of bringing in at least a quarter of a million people each year, come boom or recession. When we add refugees, temporary workers, students and others to those who arrive as immigrants, we are currently receiving closer to half a million newcomers each year. Prior to 1990, Canada had a tap on, tap off policy on immigration, determined primarily by the economic situation. But in 1990, Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, upon the advice of his immigration minister Barbara McDougall, opened the tap to permanently wide open. McDougall's aim, as she candidly admitted, was to attract the immigrant and ethnic vote away from the Liberal party, traditionally favoured by these groups, especially after Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau opened immigration to Canada beyond the traditional European source countries. Mulroney's Liberal successors, Jean Chretien and Paul Martin, kept the tap wide open, for the very same reasons as Mulroney. The government of Stephen Harper, under the revamped Conservative party, are on the same track, despite a few reforms to the immigration system. Although the tap wide open policy is relatively recent, we have, for the last 20 years, been subjected to endless propaganda that this has always been the norm. Canada is a land of immigrants and we Canadians define ourselves by our cultural mosaic, a term whose ubiquity is probably traceable to our 20-year policy of mass immigration. Anyone who questions either our immigration policy or our multiculturalism policy had better be prepared to defend his or her character.

So entrenched has the dogma of the necessity of growth through immigration become that no major national party challenges it, not even the so-called Green party. In the election campaign of 2008, all of the 4 major national political parties favoured immigration at or exceeding current levels.

We need to ask two questions. The first is whether economic prosperity is really dependent on population growth. The second is whether population growth is environmentally sustainable, even it provided economic benefits in the short-term.

It should also be pointed out that it's not even true that Canada would not grow without immigration. Canada's population would continue to grow until at least 2020 with no immigration. Although baby boomers had a much lower total fertility rate than their post-war parents, they are such a large cohort that they had a major impact on Canada's demographics.

Population growth and prosperity

Martin Collacott of the Fraser Institute, who has argued for the need for immigration reform in several of his papers, examined the link between immigration and economic well-being. The following are some of the relevant pieces of information he assembled:

- a 1991 study by the Economics Council of Canada found that in the past century, the fastest growth in real per capita income occurred at times when net migration was zero or even negative;
- a 1989 report issued by Health and Welfare Canada called Charting Canada's Future noted that, according to the OECD, there was no correlation whatsoever between population growth and economic growth in its 22-member community;

- a 2000 United Nations study concluded that immigration can only serve as a tool to arrest the aging of the population if carried out at levels that are unacceptably high and ever-increasing;
- Statistics Canada released 2001 census data in July of 2002 showing that the population was aging and that immigration, even at very high levels, would have little impact on the average age of the population;
- recent immigrants are faring much more poorly economically than those of previous generations.

An analysis by Fraser Institute economist Herb Grubel estimated that the 2.9 million immigrants who came to Canada between 1990 and the end of 2002 received \$18.3 billion more in government services and benefits in 2002 than they paid in taxes. His article can be found in a book he edited, published by the Fraser Institute in 2009. The book is called “The effects of mass immigration on Canadian living standards and society.” Other articles in the book are equally damning of Canada's immigration policy. Despite the government’s economic arguments, only 20% of immigrants are selected on the basis of their skills, the remainder are family class, refugees and humanitarian cases. Six million offspring of the boomer generation will soon be entering the labour market and may be facing stiff competition for jobs. In big city ridings, members of parliament spend most of their time dealing with immigration questions. To keep the dependency ratio at 0.2 (retirees/workers), one would need to raise the population to 165 million by 2050, or take in 7 million immigrants each year. Productivity will only increase if immigrants are more productive than the existing population, but recent immigrants have been less productive. The performance of recent immigrants has been deteriorating and recent cohorts of immigrants haven’t been catching up to native born Canadians in their earnings. This could lead to the creation of an economic underclass.

The findings of Statistics Canada also throw into question the assertion that our economic well-being depends on immigration. The period between 1980 and 2005 was one of enormous growth in Canada, yet according to Statistics Canada’s analysis of the 2006 census, the median earnings of Canadians (in inflation-adjusted 2005 dollars) increased by only 0.1% during that time. Furthermore, the earnings of the poorest fifth fell dramatically, by 20.6%, while the top 20% of earners saw their incomes rise by 16.4%.

During the current recession, many hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost in Canada, and many of the jobs that have been created are McJobs. The unemployment rate remains over 8%. Nevertheless, neither the government nor any of the opposition parties have come to the conclusion that it might be a good idea to reduce the intake of newcomers.

The finding that population growth through immigration does not translate into economic benefits was also made by a cross-party committee of the British House of Lords (Lords Economic Affairs Committee), which published its findings in 2008. The House of Lords panel said that the British government’s claim that immigrants were boosting the economy was a misleading measure, and that a better one would be the impact on income per head of resident population. The Committee said that some groups, including the low-paid, young people seeking jobs and some ethnic minorities may have suffered because of competition for work from immigrants willing to accept low wages and poor working conditions.

A cross-parliamentary committee in Britain recently published a declaration on immigration saying that “70 Million is too many” (Balanced Migration, 2010). That is the number the UK population is headed to by 2029 at current rates of immigration. “Over the last decade or so we have lost control of immigration. it will take several years to put this right,” says the declaration, and points out that nearly a million Britons voted for an “extremist party,” which is “a danger sign that cannot be ignored.” In Australia, vigorous discussions on immigration are also going on and one MP, Kelvin Thomas, has challenged the immigration policy of his leader Kevin Rudd. In the US, a number of organizations are also promoting a reduction in immigration levels.

The public debate has not yet begun in Canada.

Population growth and the environment

The answer to our first question, whether population growth driven by immigration is essential to the economic well-being of Canada, is a resounding No. Amazingly, no one, not even the Green party, is asking the second question, are current levels of population growth, driven by immigration, environmentally sustainable. Is anyone minding the store?

Apparently not, and certainly not our government. In a paper entitled “A lifetime of bad immigration policy,” John Meyer, who was president of the now defunct Zero Population Growth, describes meeting with an Immigration Department official in Ottawa in 1970 when he was a second year student in economics. “The environment had not yet been invented,” Meyer writes, but he asked the official how his department was matching immigration levels to our population targets and Canada’s resource base. His answer was that the government was doing no work in the area of per capita resource base forecasts or the effect on them of immigration rate or population size. “I wasn’t able to absorb this right away and asked the same question in different forms a number of times but got the same answer. Basically, ‘We have no national strategy or goals.’”

Now, of course, everyone uses buzzwords like “sustainable” and “green.” Still, they seem to be missing a crucial point. It is that, in the words of Herman Daly, the economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment. Our economy depends on the ecological integrity of planet Earth. When people talk about sustainability, they usually equate fiscal, or economic, or cultural sustainability with environmental sustainability. No, they don’t, they put environmental sustainability dead last. That is exactly what politicians did when they refused to do anything serious about the East coast cod fishery despite the evidence that it was ecologically unsustainable. Cutting back the catch would jeopardize jobs, i.e., the economy. People vote and fish don’t. But Nature does not tolerate standing last in line very well. Real wealth depends on the per capita ratio of resources to people, and in Canada, the natural resources and biodiversity are heading in the same direction as in the rest of the world.

In 1976, the Science Council of Canada produced a report, Report no. 25, called Population, Technology and Resources. In its introductory letter to the Honourable C.M. Drury, Minister of State for Science and Technology, the report’s authors write: “The Report draws attention to the way a rapidly growing population would exacerbate the stresses caused by existing patterns of production and consumption. It notes the probability of greatly increased pressures on Canada’s urban areas, transportation systems and related social and political institutions. Uncertainty about the extent of non-renewable—especially energy—resources is noted, and the potentially adverse effects of climatic fluctuation on Canada’s renewable resource base is considered.”

The 1976 report looked at population growth in Canada, improved living standards meaning increased per capita consumption, and the changing demographics in Canada and the world. It addressed the fact that Canada cannot possibly solve the world overpopulation problem with an immigration policy, and looked at the conflict over land that would arise between agricultural use and development, the problem of future energy supplies and the fact that Canada has been among the most energy-intensive countries in the world. The report was very clear about the fact that Canada's resources were not only finite but under pressure.

Brian Mulroney, who not fifteen years after the report's publication initiated the policy of bringing in 250,000 to 500,000 people to Canada each year, may or may not have read it. But there is another report that he could not possibly have missed, since it was produced for the Privy Council by the Intelligence Advisory Committee with input from many departments of the Canadian government while he was prime minister. The report in question was a confidential report produced in 1991 and called "The environment: marriage between Earth and mankind." I obtained it in 2000 through an Access to Information request.

The 1991 confidential document is quite blunt about the state of the environment in Canada and around the world. With respect to Canada, it says that "It is, because of its harsh climate and long distances, the most energy-intensive of the free-market industrialized nations. Canada is endowed with vast water resources, but with 90 percent of its population concentrated within a band up to 100 miles of the USA border, water resources in these areas are already being utilized to their fullest. Polluted water has become an everyday concern. Although Canada's population is not large in world terms, its concentration in various areas has already put stress upon regional environments in many ways. Canada can expect to have increasing numbers of environmental refugees requesting immigration to Canada, while regional movements of the population at home, as from idle fishing areas, will add further to population stresses within the country" (p. 12-13). The report states that "Controlling population growth is crucial to addressing most environmental problems, including global warming" (p. 9). It says that with the emergence of global environmental problems which threaten their own self-interest, developed countries will have to engage in policies in which resources are transferred to developing countries to promote environmentally sound development. "This can be seen as one aspect of paying the bill for our past environmental damage caused by rapid economic growth" (p. 11).

It seems that Mulroney and his successors mistook the advice in this document as a suggestion to relentlessly increase Canada's population through immigration. Listed below are some environmental or ecological developments in Canada that our politicians are ignoring.

Agricultural Land

A Statistics Canada report of 31 January 2005, based on census data and the Canada Land Inventory, a government database, states that urban growth has devoured some of the best agricultural land during the past 30 years, and includes the following findings:

- by 2001, Canadian cities and towns had taken over 7400 square km of land traditionally used for farming, more than doubling its incursion into rural areas;
- in 2001, there were about 14,300 square km of urban land that had formerly been used for agriculture;

- development took over 3% of “dependable agricultural land” and 7% of Canada’s Class 1 agricultural land, considered “the best and most productive”;
- the fruit belts in the Niagara peninsula of Ontario and Okanagan Valley in British Columbia have lost farmland that was used to grow crops that cannot be grown anywhere else in Canada;
- as the amount of prime agricultural land has diminished, the demand for arable territory has increased, forcing farmers to cultivate poorer quality soil;
- in 1971, urban areas occupied slightly less than 6% of Class 1 land in Ontario; by 2001, they occupied 11% of such land;
- in 1971, less than 2% of Class 1 land in Alberta was urbanized; that figure is now more than 6%
- these trends are worrisome because they are essentially permanent.

A 2001 Statistics Canada document on the urban consumption of agricultural land gives an even higher figure for land conversion in Ontario, saying that over 18% of Class 1 farmland is now being used for urban purposes (Hofmann, 2001) .

A report by the Canadian Urban Institute of 2006 says that Ontario’s population growth rate in the previous 20 years was exceptional, resulting in a 33% increase since 1986. It said that the provincial government forecast that growth would be much the same over the next 25 years, which would bring Ontario's population in 2031 to between 14.5 and 18 million. The growth rates had been particularly high in the Greater Toronto Area, where significant pressure was anticipated to be placed on natural heritage features, including “the Oak Ridges Moraine and prime agricultural land, either side of the Moraine and the Niagara Escarpment. Between 1976 and 2001, some 160,000 acres of farmland was converted to urban uses in the GTA.” On the same page (8) the report states, “The principal source of population growth in Ontario is immigration.”

You would think that with that sort of data, there would be some discussion of the benefits versus the costs of Canada’s rapidly increasing population. You’d be wrong. In his 2004–2005 annual report (Planning our Landscape, released November 2005) and at a news conference relating to it, Ontario commissioner for the environment Gord Miller addressed the impact of 4 or 5 million more people in southern Ontario a few decades hence. “This is a vast number of people settling in an already stressed landscape. Will the resulting demands for water, sewer systems and roads leave our natural heritage areas intact? Will there be enough natural lands left over to support biodiversity?” his report asks. Miller was immediately accused of being anti-immigrant. He was asked by reporters whether he was calling for a curtailment of immigration. When the answer was no, he was asked whether he was saying that immigrants should move to northern Ontario (no), whether the era of the single family home is over and whether immigrants shouldn’t dream of having their own house (no). Though he’d said earlier that it wasn’t his job to dictate where people should go, after some hounding he told one reporter that immigrants could move to northern Ontario as a solution to the Greater Toronto Area’s overcrowding. This clip was played multiple times on all local news channels. The CBC aired a response by city councillor Maria Augimenti calling for Miller’s resignation. Said Miller, “If people actually read the report, [they’ll find that] the only thing in it about immigration is that it’s another element of population growth and that it’s under federal control. That’s it.”

I wrote a letter to then Immigration minister Diane Finley in July 2008, pointing out the environmental impact of population growth in Canada driven by immigration. One of the things I pointed out was that it wasn't a good idea to pave over our food supply. I did not get a response until December, when Jason Kenney had become Immigration minister. The letter was from the head of the Immigration section of Citizenship and Immigration. It said that I had raised a number of interesting points and while it failed to address a single one of them, it pointed out how vibrant the communities were that sat on the land that was once farmland and wildland. So far, I have seen no government data that indicates why it is a good idea to bring large numbers of people to Canada and house them on what was once farmland that provided food not only for Canada but in many cases also for the countries that are sending us the people who settle on the farmland.

Water

An internal 2004 Environment Canada assessment directed toward then Environment Minister Stephane Dion chastises the federal government for failing to develop a water strategy, calls current approaches "fragmented, short-term and inadequately informed," and includes the following information:

- water shortages on the prairies caused \$5 billion in economic damage in 2001 alone and threaten economic development in the West;
- water shortages cause friction between provinces, between industries, and between Canada and the US;
- our knowledge is sketchy in vital areas: we don't know how much groundwater we have, we don't understand the effects of newer pollutants such as pharmaceuticals flushed down drains or "gender-bending" pollutants that disrupt the sex hormone system in wildlife and humans;
- in areas where we do understand the dangers, the information is scattered across different programs and provinces and is not nationally comparable;
- the federal government should develop a national vision on water and take leadership on the issue.

Biodiversity

You may have heard about our disappearing songbirds. An appeal for money sent to me by Nature Canada says that during the last 40 years, the populations of common terns, boreal chickadees, and evening grosbeaks have dropped by 71%, 70%, and 78%, respectively. The letter also says that of the 428 species of birds that regularly breed in Canada, 60 are at risk of extinction. Overall there are now thousands of endangered species (plants, fish, reptiles, mammals, birds) in Canada. Some of them are species that in some way define the mythology of Canada, such as the polar bear and the caribou. The east coast cod fishery collapsed and other fisheries (fish and crustacean) in Canada are showing severe signs of stress. Climate change is believed to be adversely affecting some species, of which the polar bear is the best known. Perhaps some species will benefit from climate change, but all species are losers when their habitat gets taken over by humans.

In 1997, the Fraser Basin Ecosystem Study, led by Michael Healey of the University of British Columbia, was published. It said that the Fraser River basin had almost three times as many people as sustainable and that, without changes, the rapidly growing urban environment of the lower mainland would overwhelm the natural resource base. Indicators of serious environmental decline in the area included high nitrogen pollution in groundwaters and the presence of visible abnormalities on more than 90% of the fish samples taken from the Fraser River. As many as 50 streams in the greater Vancouver area that once supported runs of Pacific salmon have been turned into storm sewers. Many of the remaining streams were also degraded. About 75% of the population growth in the lower mainland of BC, about 800,000 people between 1980 and 2005, results from immigration.

Greenhouse gas production

Canada's government purports to be concerned about greenhouse gas production, but you'd never know it from its immigration policy which moves vast numbers of people from low greenhouse gas-producing countries to one of the highest per capita greenhouse gas producers in the world. The top four source countries of immigrants to Canada (2006 census) are China, India, the Philippines and Pakistan. Canada's per capita energy consumption in kilograms of oil equivalent (from UNFPA State of World Population 2009) is 8262, while the values for China, India, the Philippines and Pakistan are 1433, 510, 498, and 499, respectively. South Korea, Romania, Iran, and Columbia were also among the top 10 source countries of immigrants to Canada in 2006. Their 2009 per capita energy consumption in kg of oil equivalent was 4483, 1860, 2438, and 695, respectively. Even people coming from the UK and the US, the remaining two top ten source countries, increase their GHG production by coming to Canada: per capita energy consumption values in those countries for 2009 were 3814 and 7768 kg of oil equivalent, respectively.

Due to advances in technology related to vehicles and fuels, nitrogen oxides emitted from road vehicles decreased 39% while volatile organic compounds (VOCs) decreased 60% between 1990 and 2005. Despite those improvements, greenhouse gas emissions from road transportation increased by 33% to 135 Mt of CO₂ equivalent (Environment Canada, 2007). To the Earth's atmosphere, it makes no difference who is producing the greenhouse gases or why. It is the sum total of GHGs that affects the climate.

Current population trends

Canada's population grew by 1% between 2005 and 2006 (EnviroStats, 2007, Latest Indicators). A 1% growth rate translates into a doubling time of 70 years. So, at current rates of growth and starting at 33 million people now, we would have 66 million people in 2080, and 132 million in 2150. Would our lives be better with 66 and 132 million people? Has your well-being increased with the rampant population growth in Ottawa during the last 10 years? Are our big cities becoming more liveable as their populations increase? Is anyone looking at population growth in Canada?

A study published in 2007 by Statistics Canada purported to look at the impact of population growth on the environment between 1956 and 2006 (Hofmann, 2007). During that time period, Canada's population almost doubled from 16 million to 31.6 million. Ontario's population during that time rose by 6.8 million people. While Canada's population grew by 15.5 million, the number of vehicles on the road increased by 15.8 million. In percentage terms, population increased by 97% and the number of motor

vehicles increased by 370%. The study makes the following statement: “Driving has many environmental impacts, including air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, the use of raw materials and energy to manufacture cars, and the loss of wildlife habitat to develop road networks. With increases in Canada’s population, there has been an expansion in the number of vehicles on the road. This, in turn, has increased pressure on the environment.” However, the report gives little in the way of specific data (such as the amount of land lost to wildlife by roads). In particular, I was struck by the superficiality of the short conclusion: “Over the last fifty years, Canada’s population has doubled. This increase in population has had environmental consequences. However, numerous other factors also influence Canadians’ impact on the environment, which makes determining the influence of population growth more challenging. Population growth is an important piece of the puzzle for understanding our impact on the environment; however, it must be considered in conjunction with the other pieces.”

Is it really that hard to separate out population growth from everything else? If the author had looked at the growth in the number of houses, she would have seen that the conversion of land to house recent immigrants is many times greater than the amount of land being devastated by the tar sands development in Alberta (see Appendix). Has the ability to speak forthrightly on population, as did the 1976 Science Council report, fallen victim to the pro-growth ideology?

The problem in a nutshell

Our political leaders know that current immigration policies make no sense. They know that 75% of immigrants concentrate in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal and that 90% settle in Canada’s 12 largest metropolitan areas. They know that immigration has absolutely no impact on the country’s age structure. They are aware that earnings of recent immigrants are declining and poverty rates increasing, and that the federal government spends an estimated \$18 billion more each year in services for recent immigrants than it gets back in taxes. They know that that population growth in Canada is having a negative impact on the environment, devours farmland, stresses water resources and keeps us from meeting our commitments to reducing greenhouse gases.

Yet the pro-growth propaganda continues unabated. Politicians, recognizing the importance of the immigrant vote in the so-called swing ridings in metropolitan areas, are quite prepared to put short-term political gain ahead of the long-term interests of their country. And we saw that while the average earnings of Canadians did not change between 1980 and 2005, the richest fifth got 16% richer while the poorest fifth got 20% poorer. The poorest fifth are no doubt competing for Mcjobs with some of the recent immigrants. The richest fifth might include the developers who are turning farmland into townhouses and malls, bankers providing mortgages for the new residents, and some of the businesses benefitting from cheap labour. Those benefitting financially from immigration are likely to encourage the government to keep up the good work and perhaps show their appreciation with a campaign contribution or two.

It is the federal government that sets the immigration policy, but many of the problems that result from it, such as the stresses on housing, roads, and infrastructure are borne by municipalities. Why is there not more squawking from them? Possibly because a substantial part of the campaign funding of city councillors often comes from developers, whose views on growth are pretty clear cut (in several senses perhaps).

It is also the beneficiaries of growth who provide advertising revenue for the media, which might explain why it is almost impossible to get an anti-growth article published in the newspaper. Last year, BC population activist Tim Murray thought he was actually going to get an article into the Ottawa Citizen. He had received encouragement from the editorial page editor and made the changes in length requested. Just about the time his article was going to be published, something happened on the local scene that caused the editor to tell Tim his article had been bumped. Interesting. As I told Tim, local issues are generally reported in the City section, which is completely separate from the front page section, where editorial articles are published. So it's hard to see why local issues should displace an opinion article. I think the problem the editor had was described a long time ago by Upton Sinclair, who said that it is very difficult to get a man to understand something if his salary depends on his not understanding it.

Those who benefit from growth financially are also fortunate to have their very own useful idiots, as Joseph Stalin might have called them. You would think that the left-leaning parties might be concerned with the impact of immigration on their traditional constituency, the working class, and that environmental parties might challenge the logic of adding ever more feet to a country that they say must urgently reduce its footprint. You would be wrong on both counts. The NDP and the Green party have both spoken in favour of the mass immigration policies followed by the Liberals and Conservatives. Apparently, cultural diversity makes up for the biodiversity lost to development, and the vibrancy of new developments makes up for the loss of our best farmland. Whether our descendants will be able to feed themselves with vibrancy remains to be seen.

Conclusion

Our current policy of mass immigration and its corollary multiculturalism have become a sacred ideology in Canada, rarely challenged in the public media. Public discourse is constrained by what is euphemistically called political correctness, but in my opinion is a mild form of fascism, and anyone who attempts to publicly question current policies runs the risk of being labelled a racist. The material comfort level of Canadians is still sufficiently high that few have so far dared to question the conventional wisdom.

However, it is past time to abandon the mythology of Canada as infinite in space and resources. The map of the world at night shows little evidence of human habitation in most of Canada for the same reason that there are not too many people in Antarctica. Trying to put people there would be costly in terms of environmental damage, energy use, and waste production. The inhabited part of Canada that strips along the US border is not short of people. Canadians are among the highest per capita consumers of goods and energy and emitters of greenhouse gases—the world doesn't need more of us. Our resources aren't infinite either, especially not our prime farmland. Do we really want it to go the way of the cod fishery?

In a world where the ecological stresses exerted by a human population of 6.8 billion, growing by 80 million people a year, are becoming more and more evident, the mindless pursuit of growth is just that—mindless. It is time for Canadians to abandon their mythology of a vast land of boundless resources with an infinite capacity to share the wealth. Instead, Canada should attempt to make a realistic assessment of its carrying capacity, taking into consideration quality of life and preservation of biodiversity. In a world that could very well become increasingly chaotic in coming decades, with rising

populations, resource scarcities, and conflicts against the backdrop of a changing climate, Canada could set an example by stabilizing its own population and helping other nations do the same by promoting and supporting ethical and effective family planning programs in its developmental assistance.

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Appendix

Comparison of land lost to Alberta oilsands and land lost to development in Canada:

According to an Alberta government website, **602 square km** have been disturbed by oilsands mining as of 31 March 2009 (www.energy.alberta.ca/OilSands/791.asp).

According to the Canadian Urban Institute (2006), 160,000 acres of farmland were converted to urban use in the Greater Toronto Area between 1976 and 2001. Since there are 0.00405 square km in an acre, this means that **648 square km** were converted to urban use in the GTA during that time.

According to the Statistics Canada report of 31 January 2005 on agricultural land, in 2001, there were **7400 square km** of land traditionally used for farming that had been converted to urban uses during the preceding 30 years. The total amount of land that had been converted to urban uses by 2001 was **14,300 square km**.

Dividing the Alberta government's figure for land lost to the oilsands as of 2009 (602 sq. km) into the other figures, we obtain the following:

The farmland lost to urban development in the Greater Toronto Area between 1976 and 2001 is slightly greater ($\times 1.08$) than the land lost to the Alberta oilsands. [648 sq. km \div 602 sq. km]

The farmland lost to urban development in Canada between 1971 and 2001 is 12.3 times greater than the land lost to the Alberta oilsands. [7400 sq. km \div 602 sq. km]

The farmland lost to urban development in Canada by 2001 (including that lost before 1971) is 23.8 times greater than the land lost to the Alberta oilsands. [14,300 sq. km \div 602 sq. km]